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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Identical letters dated 3 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of March 1997, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a statement concerning the expansion of Israeli settlements on occupied Arab land (Jerusalem) issued by the Council of the League of Arab States at its resumed extraordinary session on 1 March 1997.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 33, 35 and 85, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nasser bin Hamad AL-KHALIFA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Arab Group

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ANNEX

Statement issued on 1 March 1997 by the League of Arab States

The Council of the League of Arab States, at its meeting on Saturday, 1 March 1997 of the resumed extraordinary session convened on 1 December 1996 to study the expansion of Israeli settlements on occupied Arab land,

Having heard the important statements made on the issue by His Excellency Mr. Yasser Arafat, President of the State of Palestine, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and the President of the session (the Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria),

Having considered the decision taken by the Israeli Government on 26 February 1997 to build a Jewish residential neighbourhood on Jabal Abu Ghneim, south of Arab Jerusalem, a step which is considered a blatant violation of the principles on which the peace process was based and of all international laws and resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968) and 338 (1973) which emphasized the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and considered that all measures and actions taken by Israel, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, which tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem are invalid and cannot change that status,

The Council strongly condemns these Israeli measures, which it considers to be inconsistent with the principles on which the peace process was based, the spirit and the letter of the peace accords signed with the Palestinian side, and the United States letters of guarantee given to the Arab parties at the Madrid Peace Conference;

The Council regards this and other Israeli decisions as a violation of international laws and resolutions and a threat to the peace process that could plunge the region once again into struggle, tension and instability;

The Council recalls the resolutions adopted by Arab Summit Conferences, particularly the most recent Conference held in Cairo, which reaffirmed the commitment to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, based on legitimate international resolutions and the principle of land for peace, in view of the fact that peace is a strategic choice for the Arab community of nations. The Israeli Government's decision to build on Jabal Abu Ghneim, or on any occupied Arab land, will put dangerous obstacles in the path of the peace process. The Israeli Government should revoke this decision, thereby helping to build confidence between the parties to the peace process. In this context, the Council calls upon the United Nations and all its relevant organs, particularly the Security Council, to take decisive action and urge Israel to revoke its decision and halt all settlement activity;

The Council commends the international community, which has widely criticized this oppressive Israeli decision, and expresses its great appreciation to all the States which have affirmed their respect for legitimate international resolutions and criticized and condemned the Israeli decision.

Foremost among these are the European Union and the sponsors of the peace process, China, Japan, the countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Council urgently requests all States of the world to move quickly and effectively to halt the expansion of Israeli settlements on and fragmentation of occupied Arab land and to put pressure on Israel not to alter the demographic and geographical character of the city of Jerusalem. The Council expects the United States of America to play an effective role in order to save all aspects of the peace process and halt Israeli settlement on occupied Arab land;

The Council urges countries which provide Israel with financial or economic assistance to halt such assistance, since Israel uses it to implement its plans for settlements on occupied Arab land;

The Council affirms its complete solidarity with the Palestinian people and calls for its resistance to be strengthened and supported by every means, particularly through Arab funds, in order to enable it to withstand expropriation and settlement;

The Council commends the Islamic-Christian position, which is working hard to preserve the spiritual and cultural character of the city of Jerusalem and to halt Israeli violations of international resolutions and agreements and Israeli practices that threaten peace and security not only in the Middle East region, but throughout the world;

The Council decides to remain seized of the matter and to request the Secretary-General to follow developments in this field.